

Amendments to the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A combination of a shell casing for enclosing a tape measure and an integrally formed marker housing, comprising:

a first shell;

a second shell;

an attachment element that attaches said first shell to said second shell thereby enclosing the tape measure, said casing having a bottom surface that rests on an object to be measured and having a vertical recess at its front portion;

an indicator window located in the vertical recess and having an indication mark positioned to be in line with measurement increments arranged on said tape measure;

an exit slot disposed near a bottom surface of said casing and through which the tape measure slides out;

a said marker housing integrally formed with said casing and disposed proximate the vertical recess and adjacent to said casing such that a bottom surface of said marker housing is substantially coplanar with the bottom surface of said casing to minimize the vertical distance of the tape measure from the object to be measured, and said marker housing receiving a marker wherein the marker is aligned with the indication mark in said indicator window, and the said marker housing and the marker are positioned above the bottom surface of said casing so as to allow marking of the object at the measurement increment that is in line with the indication mark using one and only one hand.

2. (Currently Amended) The shell casing for enclosing the tape measure combination of Claim 1 wherein:

the marker is a blade and is aligned with the indication mark.

3. (Currently Amended) The shell casing for enclosing the tape measure combination of Claim 1 wherein:

the marker is a retractable blade received in said marker housing.

4. (Currently Amended) The ~~shell casing for enclosing the tape measure combination~~ of Claim 2 wherein the marker is a lead pencil received in said marker housing.

5. (Currently Amended) The ~~shell casing for enclosing the tape measure combination~~ of Claim 2 wherein the marker is a retractable lead pencil received in said marker housing.

6. (Currently Amended) A combination tool comprising:

a tape measure in a case, said case having a bottom surface that rests on an object to be measured and having a vertical recess at its front portion;

an indicator window located in the vertical recess and having an indication mark positioned to be in line with measurement increments arranged on said tape measure; and

an exit slot disposed near a bottom surface of said case and through which the tape measure slides out;

a retractable cutting blade housing integrally formed with said case and disposed proximate the vertical recess and adjacent to said case such that a bottom surface of said housing is substantially coplanar with the bottom surface of said case to minimize the vertical distance of the tape measure from the object to be measured, said housing and receiving a retractable cutting blade wherein the cutting blade is aligned with the indication mark in the window so as to allow marking of or making of a cut on the object at the measurement increment that is in line with the indication mark using one and only one hand.

7. (Currently Amended) A combination tool comprising:

a tape measure in a case, said case having a bottom surface that rests on an object to be measured and having a vertical recess at its front portion; and

an indicator window located in the vertical recess and having an indication mark positioned to be in line with measurement increments arranged on said tape measure; and

an exit slot disposed near a bottom surface of said case and through which the tape measure slides out;

a marker housing integrally formed with said case and disposed proximate the vertical recess and adjacent to said case such that a bottom surface of said housing is substantially coplanar with the bottom surface of said case to minimize the vertical distance of the tape measure from the object to be measured, said housing, and receiving a marker wherein said marker is aligned with the indication mark in the window and said marker is positioned ~~above the bottom surface of said case prior to marking so as to allow marking of the object at the measurement increment that is in line with the indication mark using one and only one hand.~~

8. (Currently Amended) The combination tool of Claim 6 1 wherein:

said tape measure includes a nail hole at its exposed end.

9. (Previously Presented) The combination tool of Claim 7 wherein:

said marker is adapted to use interchangeable leads or limestone.

10. (Previously Presented) The combination tool of Claim 7 wherein:

said marker is a mechanical lead pencil received in said marker housing.

11. (Previously Presented) The combination tool of Claim 7 wherein said indicator window is a clear indicator window and said indication mark includes an index line positioned to be in line with said measurement increments.

12-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously Presented) The combination tool according to claim 7, wherein said marker housing is a first marker housing, further comprising a second marker housing

integrally formed with said case, wherein said first and second marker housings are disposed on opposite sides of said indicator window.

17. (Previously Presented) The combination tool according to Claim 16, wherein said first marker housing is adapted to receive a blade and said second marker housing is adapted to receive a pencil or a pen.

18. (New) The combination of Claim 1, wherein said indicator window is a clear indicator window and said indication mark includes an index line positioned to be in line with said measurement increments.

19. (New) The combination of Claim 1, wherein:

 said indicator window is a clear indicator window; and

 said indicator window is positioned near the exit slot and directly above the tape measure exiting the exit slot.

20. (New) The combination of Claim 1, wherein the casing and the marker housing are formed as a unitary construction.